

Karla Aguilera Garcia Karla is a remarkable, passionate and caring young lady whom we are very fortunate to have welcomed into our family. She is extremely dedicated to not only providing phenomenal care to our son, Gabriel, but to also being a member of our family. Karla explained, for as long as she could remember, she dreamed of coming to the United States as an Au Pair. As such, she came to our family prepared to not only provide a safe and supportive environment for Gabriel to thrive, but she also brought with her many activities to enrich Gabriel's educational experience through learning Spanish and customs from her home country of Mexico. After first discussing her ideas with us, she began teaching Gabriel to speak Spanish as well as English. Each day she chooses a word and explains the definition to Gabriel and then says it in both English and Spanish. Gabriel enthusiastically repeats the word and each night tells us about "his Spanish" he is practicing with Karla. In addition to teaching him Spanish, Karla also displays her dedication to Gabriel's well-being through her patience and constant efforts to truly understand Gabriel and the most effective ways to capture his attention and help him advance educationally and emotionally each day. Gabriel is a very active and focused five-year-old boy, who often has difficulties verbally expressing his feelings. His inability to express himself often manifests in frustration and tears. After spending time with Gabriel, Karla recognized his struggles and created a chart for him. At the end of each day, Karla sits with Gabriel in his bedroom and talks about his day. She chooses the most critical activities Gabriel participated in that day and asks him how he felt about those activities. Gabriel will then choose an emoji sticker for each activity to help him express how those activities made him feel. If he and Karla had a great breakfast and he was able to get to the bus easily that day, he picks a sticker with a smiley face and a heart, but if he got frustrated as Karla helped him learn to tie his shoe, he may choose a sticker displaying the frustration. This activity allows Gabriel to explain his frustration through stickers and helps him understand how to talk about his feelings. Once Gabriel has chosen his stickers, Karla discusses them with him. If he chooses a sad or angry face, Karla speaks with him about the activity and they agree on a plan of action to ensure the sticker is a positive one the next day. Gabriel leaves his room excited and often brings us to the chart, so he can explain it to us. He then enthusiastically tells us all about their plan to improve his mood the following day. Watching this interaction and realizing how much

Karla truly cares for Gabriel, warms our hearts and reminds us how truly fortunate we are to have welcomed Karla to our family. Karla's compassion, patience and love will stay with Gabriel long into the future.

In addition to taking such good care of Gabriel, Karla is also very involved in Gabriel's schooling, after-school activities, and our community. Our neighborhood is very ethnically diverse and nearly seventy percent of Gabriel's elementary schools speaks English as a second language. In an effort to be involved with Gabriel's schooling, Karla accompanies the family to school events and brings Gabriel to all of his after-school activities. Karla's proactive and compassionate personality often is recognized when she acts as an interpreter for those parents who only speak Spanish and are having difficulties communicating with educators and other parents. Although Karla receives little recognition for her efforts, you can see the gratitude in the eyes of the children when the burden of helping their parents understand is shifted from their shoulders to Karla's shoulders. In addition, Karla immediately enrolled in English courses at our local university to improve her English skills to enable her to assimilate into our community more quickly. She is very dedicated to learning our language, customs and traditions.

In conclusion, Karla Aguilera Garcia is a compassionate, dedicated and intelligent young lady who has already made a very significant positive impact on the welfare of our entire family. She flawlessly manages a very hectic schedule and ensures Gabriel always safe, healthy and active. No matter the outcome of this contest, she is truly our Au Pair of the Year!

